



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 19, 2025

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 731 - First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT - REVISED TESTIMONY

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

This bill would formalize work being coordinated under what's been known as a wildlife crossing coalition. We are aware of the Maryland Department of Transportation's amendment requesting to be named as Chair of the Maryland Connectivity Coalition established in this bill and are supportive of that amendment request. As currently written the bill requires the Coalition to meet quarterly regarding the various tasks outlined in the bill. Given the current fiscal uncertainty the Department would respectfully request consideration be given to language that would account for this so that the Coalition would meet and implement actions when practicable, provided there is funding to support such actions. The Department has been in discussions with the sponsor about this and is happy to continue working to a mutually agreeable resolution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wildlife collisions with automobiles - particularly deer collisions - can have serious consequences for Maryland drivers and passengers. This bill proposes to use engineering solutions to solve these issues. It also seeks to provide funding for road crossing structures for rare animal species.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill prescribes numerous activities related to investigating and addressing places where there is contact between Wildlife and State highways. It establishes a fund for this work. It establishes and prescribes the conduct of a committee to oversee this work and a fund source. It establishes a requirement that highway interaction with Wildlife be incorporated into county comprehensive plans.

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